

OFFICE OF
THE SUPREME COUNCIL

OF THE

United Orders of Railway Employes,

Embracing the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, Brotherhood of Railroad
Brakemen and Switchmen's Mutual Aid Association.

OFFICIAL CIRCULAR, NO. 1.

CHICAGO, ILL., June 6, 1889.

To all Subordinate Lodges:

DEAR SIRS AND BROTHERS:—You are hereby notified that at a meeting of the representatives of the three Orders above named, held in the city of Chicago, Ill., beginning June 3d, 1889, a plan of federation was formulated and agreed upon, the same being now in full force and effect.

The federation board, having jurisdiction of the three organizations, is known as the Supreme Council of the United Orders of Railway Employés, and its acts and decisions upon all matters of grievance are final.

A constitution and common seal have been adopted, and a copy of the constitution of the Supreme Council will in due time be forwarded to each Lodge of each organization, which shall be the property of the Lodge and shall be kept with the secret work of the Lodge, and under no circumstances shall the said constitution be taken from the Lodge-room, except by authority of the Lodge.

The Supreme Council takes occasion to warn all members of the several organizations embraced in its jurisdiction against the so called Voluntary Relief Associations, which are being organized upon some of the principle railwa.ys The purpose of such Relief Associations is apparent to the most casual observer. The methods employed to capture employés is like the alluring song of the spider to the fly. Of course it is made to appear that the authors of the movement are animated by a purely philanthropic spirit; that the high purpose is to provide for "our dear employés," who must be cared for on the same principle that the owners of plantations in the days of chattel slavery provided for their slaves.

Brothers, the simple purpose of such movements, stripped of their alluring embellishments, is to undermine and ultimately destroy every organization of railway employés. At first the system is voluntary, so as to make the bait more tempting, and the scheme more plausible; but, as soon as a sufficient number of the employés have been taken in under the voluntary arrangements, penalties more or less direct will be attached to the non-participants, and later on it will be found that the so-called voluntary plan is compulsory, and that the men have placed themselves in a position to be the victims of the despotic sway of the corporation.

We are persuaded that the time has not come for railroad employés to abdicate their manhood, sacrifice their self-respect and strip themselves naked of independence. We are inclined to the opinion that railroad employés have an ambition above the plane contemplated by voluntary relief associations, which would reduce them to the level of serfs and constitute them a part of the rolling stock of the corporation. We take the position that a corporation is simply required to treat its employés fairly, and pay them fair wages for fair work. If this is done, the employés can provide for their own relief in their own way, they can employ their own doctors and otherwise administer their own affairs without becoming the wards of the corporation or being subjected to humiliations of surveillance, under the guise of solicitude for their welfare.

Brethren, we call your attention to this matter for your own good. We would warn you against what we believe to be an organized effort to destroy your organization, thereby depriving you of the protection you now enjoy, and which, if successful, will place you at the mercy of the corporation.

Now that the organization of Brakemen, Switchmen and Firemen have federated, the Supreme desire is unity and harmony all alone the line. Let local discontent and factional feeling disappear. Let the motto be, "Each for all and all for each."

The step we have taken has far reaching significance. It practically unites the three organizations into one body for mutual protection. We appeal to each member who is enlisted under the banner of federation to be a true soldier in the cause. Let the past with its differences and prejudices be forgotten. A new era has dawned and the future is rich with promise. Hand in hand we shall march forward together, animated with high ambitions and noble purposes. Our sympathies for each other, born of mutual peril and mutual privations should cement us together as one brotherhood, and to be a true and devoted member of that brotherhood should be the ambition of each and all who hope for the triumph of labor over corporate oppression and injustice.

We salute you, brethren, in behalf of the Supreme Council of the United Orders of Railway Employés, and trusting that your hearts are attuned, as are our own, to the harbinger notes of victory, we are,

Yours, fraternally,

A large, flowing cursive signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. J. Dargan".

President.

A large, flowing cursive signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank Sweeney".

Vice President.

A large, flowing cursive signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. F. O' Shea".

Secretary and Treasurer.

S. E. Williamson

W. G. Eden

John Downey

John Hall

John J. Hannahan

Eugene F. Debs

Supreme Council U. O. R. E.

